

February 27, 2023

Written Testimony of THE JEWISH COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL, JEWISH FEDERATION
OF GREATER HARTFORD

Before the Appropriations Committee concerning H.B. 6659 – An Act Concerning the State Budget for the
Biennium Ending June 30, 2025 and Making Appropriations Therefor.

Dear Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and Distinguished Members of the Appropriations Committee,

On behalf of the Jewish Community of Greater Hartford, the board of the Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) of the Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford supports the request of the Connecticut Commission on Community Gun Violence Intervention and Prevention (“Commission”) for an allocation of \$20 million dollars in funding in H.B. 6659, the State’s Biennium Budget. These are vital to enable the Commission to continue its crucial mission to substantially reduce the incidents of gun violence and its resulting deleterious public health consequences in our State.

The Jewish Community Relations Council educates and galvanizes the Jewish community on issues of social justice, combats hate and antisemitism, and advocates for public policies consistent with Jewish values. One of the core tenets of Judaism is *tikkun olam*, repairing the world. In that vein, our legislative priorities focus on issues such as protecting our most vulnerable populations, feeding the hungry, caring for the sick, fighting an anti-hate and antisemitism culture, and fostering economic growth.

Violence prevention services are at the forefront of addressing violence and trauma with our most vulnerable populations. Death due to gun violence disproportionately impacts people of color. While Black individuals make up only about 10% of our State’s population, 56% of the victims of homicides by gun in Connecticut are Black. Young Black men are particularly at risk; killed by guns at about 39 times the rate that young White men are so killed. (Connecticut Against Gun Violence, citing “The Economic Costs of Gun Violence in Connecticut,” Giffords Law Center Article). Violence intervention workers reduce the rates of violent injury recidivism by attending to victims at the scenes of violent crimes, visiting and providing needed services to injured individuals both during and after their hospital stay, and working with high-risk individuals and notably youth at risk to prevent retaliation. Street outreach programs such as Hartford Communities that Care, Mothers United Against Violence, the Brother Carl Institute, and Compass Youth Collaborative have helped to significantly reduce gun injuries. Investing in the impactful work of these frontline workers requires ongoing training, support, and compensation. Therefore, sustainable funding is essential to enable these vital services to continue and expand effectively.

Comprised of experts in their respective fields -- trauma surgeons, public health professionals, and community-based intervention specialists, the Commission, administered through the Department of Public Health, evaluates best practices for the above-described violence prevention organizations and distributes funding from the State to such organizations. The Commission was allocated \$2.9 million dollars in the FY 2023 budget to distribute to violence prevention organizations across the State. While helpful, the Commission concluded in its final report in January 2023 to be submitted to the General Assembly that this amount was markedly inadequate and has recommended that funding be allocated at \$20 million dollars over a two year period in order to provide an effective continuity of resources and support for the violence intervention and prevention organizations that need such funding. We urge the

Committee to support this request for funding in this vital area of reducing gun violence and its resulting damaging consequences to public health.

Thank you for your consideration. You are welcome to contact us with any questions by contacting Danielle Moghadam, Director of JCRC, at dmoghadam@jewishhartford.org or 860-727-6152.

SINCERELY,

GARY S. STARR, CHAIR, JCRC, JEWISH FEDERATION OF GREATER HARTFORD

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